

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MANAMA 01086 01 OF 02 211720Z

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 PRS-01 H-02 EB-07 CIEP-01

OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSC-01 /082 W
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R 211455Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA BAHRAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHINGTON DC 2452

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN JORDAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO EGYPT

AMEMBASSY DOHA QATAR

AMEMBASSY JIDDA SAUDI ARABIA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT OMAN

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IRAN

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

COMIDEASTFOR

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE

CNO WASHINGTON DC

SECDEF WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANAMA 01086

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS : PFOR, BA

SUBJECT : BAHRAINI POLITICAL SITUATION

REF : MANAMA 1057

SUMMARY: BAHRAIN REMAINS CALM WITH THE AL KHALIFA AND THEIR
MINISTERS INSISTING THEIR DECISION TO DO AWAY WITH PARLIAMENT
HAS BROAD AND ENTHUSIASTIC POPULAR SUPPORT. WHILE GOB INSISTS
ON ITS CONTINUING DEVOTION TO CONSTITUTION AND DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNMENT, THE LEADERSHIP OBVIOUSLY PLANS TO CONCENTRATE ON
ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS RATHER THAN THE
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PAGE 02 MANAMA 01086 01 OF 02 211720Z

RESUSCITATION OF DEMOCRATIC LIFE OVER COMING MONTHS. THE

CABINET RESHUFFLE, WHILE PROCEDURALLY LINKED TO REGIME'S POLITICAL MOVES, WAS ESSENTIALLY ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURE TO REORGANIZE AND ENHANCE EFFICIENCY OF ECONOMIC MINISTRIES. GOB PLEASED BY REACTION OF NEIGHBORS (EXCEPT KUWAIT) WHILE DISPLAYING SIGNIFICANT CONCERN ABOUT U.S. REACTION TO STEPS IT HAS TAKEN. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PARTY LINE. SINCE TALK WITH FOREIGN MINISTER REPORTED REFTEL, WE HAVE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO TOUCH MOST KEY GOVERNMENT BASES AT THE SOMEWHAT TURGID PACE DICTATED BY RAMADAN. FROM AMIR THROUGH KEY COMMONER MINISTERS, GOB IS STICKING CLOSELY TO "PARTY LINE". IT WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE ITS DECISION TO DISSOLVE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IS POPULAR WITH ALL RIGHT THINKING BAHRAINIS. GOB MINISTERS TELL US PEOPLE URGENTLY WANT EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT BY DECREE AND ADMINISTRATIVE FIAT TO SOLVE PRESSING ECONOMIC/SOCIAL PROBLEMS, NOTABLY, HOUSING AND HIGH PRICES. WHILE INSISTING TO A MAN THAT GOB REMAINS DEDICATED TO CONSTITUTION AND DEMOCRACY, AMIR AND HIS MINISTERS LEAVE NO DOUBT THEY ARE IN NO HURRY TO COME UP WITH ALTERNATIVE TO ALLEGEDLY UNLAMENTED NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT. THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT WAS PROCEDURALLY IMPORTANT IN THE POLITICAL DRAMA SINCE IT PROVIDED A MECHANISM TO LAUNCH STEPS NECESSARY TO DISSOLVE THE PARLIAMENT. THE RESULTANT CABINET RESHUFFLE AND REORGANIZATION. HOWEVER, WERE VIRTUALLY DEVOID OF POLITICAL AS OPPOSED TO ADMINISTRATIVE SIGNIFICANCE. THE SHIFTING OF MUNICIPALITIES/AGRICULTURE MINISTER TO JUSTICE, THE JUSTICE MINISTER TO LABOR AND THE LABOR MINISTER TO THE NEW COMMUNICATIONS PORTFOLIO WERE SIMPLY EFFORTS TO FIND THE MOST EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR FOR CERTAIN JOBS. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE WAS THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE ECONOMIC MINISTRIES, WITH NEW MINISTRIES OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HOUSING AND COMMERCE/ECONOMY/AGRICULTURE BEING FORMED UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE BRIGHTEST SECOND LEVEL TALENT OF THE OVERBURDENED FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT MINISTRIES. THERE REMAINS SPECULATION WHETHER THE AGING AND AILING FINANCE MINISTER, SHORN OF MUCH OF HIS FORMER RESPONSIBILITIES, WILL RETIRE, TO BE REPLACED EITHER BY INFORMATION MINISTER MOAYYED (THE BEST ECONOMIST IN THE GOVERNMENT) OR WITH HIS DUTIES ABSORBED

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PAGE 03 MANAMA 01086 01 OF 02 211720Z

BY DEVELOPMENT MINISTER SHIRAWI WHO HAS BEEN THE KEY ECONOMIC FIGURE IN THE GOVERNMENT FOR SOME TIME.

3. THE POLITICAL MOOD. EXCEPT FOR NOTING THE STREETS ARE QUIET AND THAT AL KHALIFA AND THEIR CABINET COLLEAGUES SEEM QUITE PLEASED WITH THEMSELVES, IT IS DIFFICULT, PARTICULARLY IN THIS SEASON, AND PARTICULARLY FOR THE AMERICAN EMBASSY WHICH IS LOCALLY ACCUSED OF "MASTERMINDING" THE DEMISE OF PARLIAMENT,

TO GET A FIRM GRIP ON PUBLIC REACTION TO THE REGIME'S CRACK-DOWN. MEMBERS OF THE LEFT ARE OBVIOUSLY UNHAPPY IF NOT INCARCERATED. WE HEAR THAT THE RIGHT WING SHIA RELIGIOUS FACTION IS ALSO DISPLEASED SINCE IT IS BEING ACCUSED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF BEING A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE "FAILURE" OF THE PARLIAMENTARY EXPERIMENT AND, HAVING LITTLE POWER BASE IN THE MODERNIST BUREAUCRACY, IN LOSING THE ASSEMBLY HAS LOST MUCH OF ITS LEVERAGE ON THE GOVERNMENT. THE AMIR ASSURES ME MERCHANTS AND "GOOD BAHRAINIS" ARE DELIGHTED TO SEE THE ASSEMBLY GO; THE PRIME MINISTER SAYS THE VILLAGE FOLK HAVE ASSURED HIM THEY COULD CARE LESS ABOUT THE ASSEMBLY SO LONG AS THE GOVERNMENT MEETS THEIR PRESSING BREAD AND BUTTER NEEDS; MINISTER OF STATE FOR CABINET AFFAIRS URRAYED (WHOM WE UNDERSTAND THE AL KHALIFA SUSPECTED AS A POTENTIAL CRITIC OF THEIR MOVE BUT WHO IN ANY EVENT IS NOW CROWING THE PARTY LINE) WOULD EVEN HAVE US BELIEVE THAT THE MODERATE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY ARE DELIGHTED THAT THEIR BODY HAS BEEN DISSOLVED. SOME INFLUENTIAL MINISTERS, NOTABLY SHAIKH ABDULLA KHALID (JUSTICE) AND INFORMATION MINISTER MOAYYED (WHO APPEARS TO HOLD PRIVATE OPINION THAT THE GOB OVERREACTED IN DEALING WITH THE LEFT) QUIETLY STRESS THE NEED TO RETURN PROMPTLY TO SOME SORT OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURE. THE AMIR, WHO OBVIOUSLY IS FEELING HIS OATS AFTER A LONG PERIOD OF FRETTERING ABOUT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, SEEMS IN NO RUSH, PREFERRING TO FOCUS ON CRACKING DOWN FURTHER ON ANY GOVERNMENT CRITICS, SUCH AS FORMER LEFTIST DEPUTY MARHUN, WHO HAS JUST MOUTHED OFF IN KUWAIT.

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PAGE 01 MANAMA 01086 02 OF 02 211714Z

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OMB-01 TRSE-00 SSC-01 /082 W
----- 058155

R 211455Z SEP 75

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INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI UAE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MANAMA 01086

4. FOREIGN REACTION. GOB IS DELIGHTED AT SUPPORT MOST GULF NEIGHBORS HAVE GIVEN IT. THE AMIR SINGLES OUT IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA, BUT IS EMBARRASSED BY ACCUSATIONS (WHICH WE SUSPECT ARE ACCURATE) THE SAUDI ARABIA EXERTED PRESSURE ON BAHRAIN TO MAKE THIS MOVE AND WILL PAY FOR MOST OF THE BREAD AND BUTTER HANDOUTS THE GOVERNMENT WILL GIVE THE PEOPLE IN PLACE OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY. THE AMIR AND PRIME MINISTER EXPRESS PARTICULAR IRRITATION AT KUWAIT'S WILLINGNESS TO PERMIT ITS NEWSPAPERS TO PROVIDE A FORUM FOR LEFTIST BAHRAINI DEPUTIES CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S MOVE. TO A MAN, AND WITH OBVIOUS CONCERN, THE AMIR AND MINISTERS WITH WHOM I HAVE TALKED HAVE ASKED THE USG REACTION. I EXPLAINED THAT WE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MANAMA 01086 02 OF 02 211714Z

MADE NO OFFICIAL PUBLIC COMMENT AND ARE UNLIKELY TO DO SO; THAT WE HAVE BEEN PLEASED TO SEE BAHRAIN LAUNCH THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT AND WERE GRATIFIED AT THE GOVERNMENT'S STATED INTENT TO CONTINUE IT; AND THAT WE HAVE NO ADVISE ON HOW PRECISELY BAHRAIN SHOULD GO ABOUT THIS AND, AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE, HAVE NO INTENTION TO INTERFERE IN WHAT IS AN INTERNAL BAHRAINI AFFAIR.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CONSTITUTION, POLITICAL STABILITY, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MANAMA01086
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750327-0542
From: MANAMA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750931/aaaabawv.tel
Line Count: 209
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MANAMA 1057
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <25 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <05 NOV 2003 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: : BAHRAINI POLITICAL SITUATION
TAGS: PFOR, BA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006